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## Three Software-as-a-Service Resellers

– James E. Gaskin, Network World

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Some people complain because SaaS (Software As A Service) applications can't be customized to suit their needs. Of course small businesses have never had the ability to change applications like Microsoft Office, but help abounds for companies wanting installation and configuration support. Now a growing number of SaaS resellers and consultants offer the same level of support for hosted applications. Let's look at help available for [Google Apps](#), [HyperOffice](#) and [InfoStreet's StreetSmart](#).

### Software as a Service (SaaS) Definition and Solutions

Allen Falcon, CEO of [Horizon Info Services](#), started reselling Google Apps "before Google was quite ready to provision and handle new customers." His company, a spinoff from a company that provides technical executives to small companies, started with Postini for e-mail archiving and discovery services. When Google gobbled up Postini, Falcon became one of the two dozen initial Google Enterprise reseller partners.

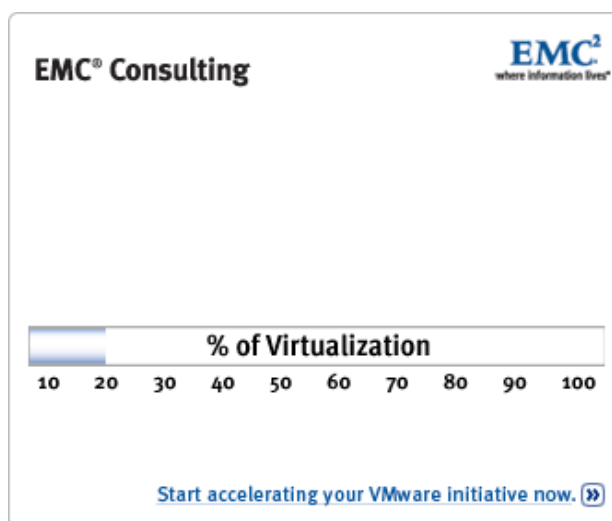
"Google doesn't want to be in the support business, so we do that," Falcon said. "We help with initial planning and data migration as well." The company has five employees and 15 independent sales reps, mostly in the northeast and Florida.

Few of Falcon's customers throw Microsoft Office out when they add Google Apps. "They want to keep their investment in Office, but we handle the Office integration for them with some third party tools."

One product Falcon mentioned was [OffiSync](#), a tool currently in beta that interweaves Google Apps and Office Apps in some interesting ways. "There are a number of third parties filling in the gaps left by Google, making things easier for customers," said Falcon.

Gaps remain in several areas of both Office and Google Apps, according to Falcon. "Outlook address lists are clumsy with no synchronization between services. Google lets you build a global e-mail list for an administrator to manage, but won't do a user interface. A number of third parties are working on tools to manage that problem."

Customers come to Google Apps in general, and Falcon in particular, for e-mail and calendaring. Once they dig deeper, they "get excited about Google Talk with Instant Messaging transcripts, then Google Sites that let them do 90% of what SharePoint does for internal teams and secure customer portals," Falcon said.



Bundled with support, Falcon charges \$75 per user per year for Google Apps. Setup fees vary per user depending on whether Horizon techs must transfer mail from Exchange servers or individual users mailboxes. "Google's new message sync for Outlook is a great move," said Falcon. "It's much easier for end users."

Companies looking for a single horizontal application to help them coordinate, collaborate, share and communicate may find themselves looking at HyperOffice. If you're in the one of the Carolinas, you may instead meet with Randy Looper of [Carolina Regional](#) and learn about his relabeled version called [Real Smart Office](#).

Started nearly a decade ago, Carolina Regional has a downtown office with one person: Looper. Work on Web sites, programming, marketing and media placement projects are handled by one of Looper's 27 subcontractors scattered around the area and the country, all coordinated through a custom ticket assignment and tracking application for job assignment and HyperOffice for everything else.

"We use HyperOffice to run our business, and created a version for our customers we call Real Smart Office," said Looper. "It's become popular with real estate firms in the area."

"Smaller real estate firms with 10 to 200 agents like Real Smart Office because they get the same level of collaboration, calendars, document sharing and control the big companies have but for much less," Looper said. "We now have hundreds of different clients."

Real estate company managers seem to like the control Real Smart Office gives them. "They store all their forms and contracts there so any agent can get them at any time," Looper said. "Managers can see what agents are doing and handle things for them if they're out of touch. Even better, when an agent leaves, the manager can cut them off immediately."

Looper has added lead management import and export tools that coordinate with real estate specific applications. When Looper meets with a customer interested in collaboration tools, he shows them his own Real Smart Office system that runs his own business.

Another virtual company, [R. B. Hall Associates](#), coordinates four employees through StreetSmart from InfoStreet. Owner Rodney Hall said, "I wanted to develop my business to prove these cloud tools really work. They do, but you have to understand your business process and choose the right tools."

Hall's customers include schools, local government offices, financial services, small law firms and other service organizations. His slogan, "Business problems ... technology solutions" illustrates his company's expertise managing technology for customers.

Using programming interfaces provided by InfoStreet, Hall integrates StreetSmart with other programs like Promethean that powers network-addressable white boards to facilitate online learning. "Commercial realtors want their own database to search, so we pull information down from the services and build their private database for easy access," Hall said.

Leveraging StreetSmart's Customer Relationship Management module often requires pulling information from here and yon, said Hall. "If we can export or convert the incoming data to XML, we can pull it into StreetSmart."

New hosted applications continue to appear, and existing ones keep changing and becoming more flexible. As more resellers specialize in SaaS, every small business will have an easy way to get exactly what they need delivered through their browser.

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